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RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 0443  
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 3998  
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 4227  
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EUR/RPM FOR AARON COPE  
S/SRAP FOR JARRETT BLANC  
SCA FOR TOM GRAMAGLIA AND CAROLYN COBERLY

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [IT](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: ITALY AGREES ON THE NEED TO AVOID  
TALK OF EXIT STRATEGY

REF: A. STATE 4108  
[1](#)B. ROME 83  
[1](#)C. STATE 6355

Classified By: Political-Military Counselor J. Liam Wasley for Reasons  
1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) The Ambassador raised Ref A points with Italian MOD La Russa at a lunch on January 19, asking him to help underscore in public that NATO's planning process for ISAF transition to Afghan lead at the provincial level is not an exit strategy. La Russa agreed and said that Italian commanders in the field were working closely with ANSF units and would help to evaluate their state of readiness as the planning process moved forward. He noted that, in the Italian-led RC-West, at least, the ANSF were not ready to take the lead.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) Poloff delivered Ref A and C points to Sergio Mercuri, Italian MFA Special Envoy for Afghanistan, and Carlo Batori, MFA ISAF Desk Officer, on January 19 and 22. Both concurred with the need to avoid giving the public impression that the conditions-based provincial transition to ANSF security lead was an exit strategy, and expressed concerns that the British were pushing for clear transition dates for domestic political reasons. They stressed the need to ensure that both the security transition process and the reintegration process were Afghan-led and responded to political conditions on the ground, not just security factors.  
THORNE